

Michigan United Conservation Clubs
2101 Wood Street
Lansing, MI 48912

September 9, 2005

Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs of the House Committee on Government Reform
Field Hearing: "Protecting our Great Lakes: Ballast Water and the Impact of Invasive Species"

Michigan United Conservation Clubs is a statewide conservation organization that has represented the views of million of conservationists since 1937. MUCC has 458 affiliated clubs with over 200,000 members and 60,000 individual members all united to ensure conservation of Michigan's natural resources.

The members of Michigan United Conservation Clubs are people who understand the balance between economy and ecology. That is the reason we are conservationists and not preservationists. A conservationist believes in the wise use of resources. We see the benefits of taking from nature for man's benefit and enjoyment, but we respect and care for our resources, understanding that if we take it all or use it wastefully today there will be nothing left for tomorrow. And Michigan's hunters and anglers have been paying to protect, conserve and keep Michigan's natural resources healthy and productive since the first hunting and fishing licenses were issued.

There are a lot of issues that raise the concern and ire of Michigan's hunters and anglers- the state's conservationists- and at the top of their list is aquatic invasive species. Nothing is as frustrating as being told there is nothing that can be done about a problem that has invaded your home and begun to destroy the very resources you have been working your whole life to protect.

Experts and scientists have said there is nothing we can do about most of the aquatic invasive species within the Great Lakes ecosystem except try to manage them as best we can. Over 160 invasive species have entered the Great Lakes since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, with control costs estimated at \$137 billion per year. Seventy-seven percent of these new organisms are attributed to ballast water discharge.

Aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes have led to some severe and irreversible consequences. Zebra mussels and other miniscule invasives are working to destroy the foundation of the Great Lakes food web- a tiny shrimp called *diporeia*. Sea lamprey caused the collapse of the lake trout fisheries in the 1940s and 50s. The round goby is competing with native fish for food. All of these pressures and more have begun to change the ecology of the Great Lakes. Fish species that once thrived are declining. They can not stand much more pressure and we must work quickly to keep new intruders from entering our Great Lakes.

Surrounded by the Great Lakes, Michigan has ample opportunity to see the changes brought about by aquatic invasives. A large chunk of Michigan's economy depends on a healthy fishery. There are over 1 million anglers residing in Michigan and over 352 thousand people visit Michigan just to fish. These anglers contribute over \$830 million dollars to Michigan's economy when you add up license fees, hotel rooms, fishing equipment, boat rentals and purchases, food and drinks, gas, etc. Think of all the jobs these services provide. And the very bases of many of these expenditures is a healthy Great Lakes fishery.

With so much at stake, Michigan's legislature took a brave step forward this year and enacted some tough regulations to help prevent the introduction of new aquatic invasives. Michigan is the only Great Lakes state to have implemented laws that help regulate ballast water in order to protect the Lakes from the threat of invasive species. Bi-partisan legislation was passed in June of 2005 that looks to protect Michigan's waters from the threats of invasive species. It defines invasive species in ballast water as pollution and therefore, subject to regulation by the state. It requires ocean-going vessels stopping in Michigan's ports to get a permit from the Department of Environmental Quality and to treat ballast water to kill invasive species. The legislation also authorizes the creation of a multi-state Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Species Coalition, which will help achieve coordination among the Great Lakes states on measures to prevent and manage invasive species.

By doing this Michigan places itself in a sticky situation. The state is working to protect its borders and waters and serve as an example for the other Great Lakes states and Canadian provinces, but by placing these restrictions on itself, it also opens itself up to losing business from the shipping industry. Why should ships stop in Michigan and deal with all our regulations when they could stop in any of the other Great Lakes states without the red tape? The other Great Lakes states and provinces must take responsibility for reducing the threat of invasive species as well. We need legislation that keeps new invasive species out of the entire Great Lakes Basin.

MUCC is grateful for the opportunity to be here today and we are even more grateful that Congresswoman Miller has called this hearing. We have been waiting for someone to take a proactive approach at the federal level and are glad to see Michigan's own Congresswoman take on that role. This hearing is an example of the forward thinking and motivated behavior that is necessary if we are going to protect the Great Lakes from further invasion.

We would ask Congresswoman Miller to consider the following suggestions:

- We need strong leadership from Congress to seek out and collaborate with Canadian leaders on this issue, especially in dealing with ballast water controls. Ultimately, fixing the problem in the United States means nothing, if invasives can still enter in Canada. We would urge Congresswoman Miller to fill this critical, often overlooked role by supporting a reference from the United States government to the International Joint Commission, asking them to address the

need for coordination and harmonization of invasive species prevention and control.

- To ensure that the Coast Guard's voluntary Best Management Practices (BMP's) program for NOBOBs becomes mandatory and fully enforced as soon as possible.
- We would ask Congresswoman Miller to please take the lead in advancing the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaborative including:
 - Enacting comprehensive federal legislation that contains all the provisions we see in S. 770. S.770 addresses many of the holes that currently exist, not just in regulating ballast water, but in closing many of the other loop holes that serve as pathways for invasive species. We need reasonable and necessary timelines like the ones outlined in this legislation which are important when fighting this uphill battle.
 - The Great Lakes Regional Collaborative recognized that the government may not be able to implement mandatory ballast standards/technology by 2011. We need to have a back-up plan in case this occurs. We would ask Congresswoman Miller to take on this role by calling for the study and development of a trans-shipment study for the Great Lakes, which would keep out the ocean-going ships and the invasives they carry if ballast water technology fails to be a feasible, timely solution. Development of a trans-shipment study would be the first time this type of innovative thinking would enter the political fray and may be a solution, not only to preventing introduction of invasive species, but to a beleaguered economy. Can we translate the transfer of goods from oceangoing vessels onto trains and lake carriers into jobs and economic growth within the region?
- Finally, if Congress and the administration fail to move in a timely manner, we would ask Congresswoman Miller to help the other Great Lakes states move forward with legislation, as similar to or stronger than what Michigan has done to stop the spread of invasive species via ballast water. We would also ask that she fight to protect the ability of the Great Lakes states to enact their own regulations, stronger than those of the federal government.

The first step toward the control and management of invasive species is stemming the flow of new arrivals. Congresswoman Candice Miller must lead the way in taking an active interest and approach to stemming the tide of invasive species entering the Great Lakes. It is leadership and direction of the type that has called this hearing that will be required if we are to make a difference and keep the ecosystem of the Great Lakes from being further degraded.

The problems and challenges caused by invasive species have increased over the years as the Great Lakes region takes its place in the world's ever expanding global economy. We are likely to see more imports and exports from around the globe in the future, not less, and the transport of these goods leads to the greater threat of invasive species being imported along with lumber, textiles and other goods. Michigan's conservationists want

to see a booming economy. We want to see the Great Lakes prosper and thrive- they are the very backbone that supports our way of life and our livelihoods, but in order for the Lakes to thrive we need to prevent the spread of new invasive species.